

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

ACTION EUR-00

INFO	LOG-00	NP-00	AF-00	CIAE-00	DODE-00	EB-00	VC-00
	TEDE-00	INR-00	L-00	VCE-00	AC-00	NSAE-00	NSCE-00
	OMB-00	PA-00	PM-00	PRS-00	ACE-00	P-00	SP-00
	SS-00	TRSE-00	T-00	IIP-00	PMB-00	DRL-00	G-00
	SAS-00	/000W					

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FM AMEMBASSY ACCRA
TO SECDEF WASHDC IMMEDIATE
SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8120
CDR USEUCOM VAHINGEN GE IMMEDIATE
INFO ECOWAS COLLECTIVE
AMEMBASSY LOME

C O N F I D E N T I A L ACCRA 000535

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/16/2015

TAGS: [GH](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL TO](#)

SUBJECT: MEETING WITH TOGO OPPOSITION LEADER GILCHRIST
OLYMPIO

Classified By: POLCHIEF SCOTT TICKNOR FOR REASONS 1.5 D AND E.

11. (C) Summary: On March 15, PolChief met in Accra with Togolese opposition leader Gilchrist Olympio, at PolChief's request. Olympio hoped the April 24 election would be free and fair enough for a credible outcome and was confident the combined opposition would win. Nigerian President Obasanjo and ECOWAS Executive Secretary Chambas clearly conveyed to him that they would not support a delay in the election or a change to the Togolese constitution at this time. He was disappointed that ECOWAS leaders lack the funding and/or will to engage effectively on Togo. Pressure from President Bush was key in convincing Faure Gnassingbe to step down. Olympio hopes for USG help with technical advice and funding for observers in the election, as well as continued pressure on the Togolese government. End summary.

Elections

12. (C) Olympio believes the scheduled April 24 election in Togo will not be fully free and fair, and acknowledges that the military may try to intimidate or obstruct voters. The opposition has only been given nine days to review the voter register, which he said was much too little time. Nonetheless, he hopes the elections can be free and fair enough to produce a credible democratic outcome. He believes that consensus opposition candidate Emmanuel Akitani-Bob has a good chance of winning the election. Togolese are tired of the Eyadema legacy, he affirmed, noting that the Akitani-Bob had won an impressive 34 percent of the vote in the 2003 election, despite President Eyadema's election rigging and the fact that Olympio only visited Togo twice during the campaign.

13. (C) Olympio realizes he cannot run as a candidate this election because the current constitution requires a candidate to reside in Togo for 12 months before the poll. Any opposition effort to change this clause in the constitution at this time would be blocked by Gnassingbe cronies. Olympio had recently met in Abuja with Nigerian President Obasanjo and ECOWAS Executive Secretary Chambas, who made clear that they would not support, nor did they believe there would be much international support for, a move to change the Togolese constitution at this point or to delay the election beyond the constitutionally determined April 24 date. Olympio told PolChief he disagreed with their interpretation of the constitution and would prefer a delay in the election date, but he was resigned to accept that the election would have to go forward for April 24. He was not overly concerned about the constraints of a ban on political campaigning and media coverage 30 days prior to the official campaign period, saying the opposition had informal ways of spreading its message. He was more worried that the military could intervene to hamper opposition campaigning. If Akitani-Bob wins the election, Olympio envisions a possible referendum to change the constitution.

The Role of ECOWAS

14. (C) Olympio was largely dismissive of ECOWAS. Nigeria is the only country which matters in ECOWAS, Olympio opined. He confirmed that Obasanjo had threatened Gnassingbe with Nigerian military intervention, which Olympio thought the Nigerian public would widely support. However, Olympio thought the threat was not seen as credible because Nigeria was not in a military or financial position to follow through

with it.

15. (C) Other ECOWAS countries have had little impact on the Togo crisis. Niger is going through the motions as ECOWAS Chair but, like other small countries in ECOWAS, it has no money to put into ECOWAS efforts. Ghanaian President Kufuor wants to avoid instability on Ghana's eastern flank, especially with troubles to the west in Cote d'Ivoire. Olympio said he wrote a letter to Kufuor after his recent inauguration, urging him to play a more active role in promoting democracy in Togo, but he did not get a response. Olympio has known Kufuor for many years (they were at Oxford University together) but Olympio said they are not close friends. He was appreciative that Kufuor had provided him bodyguards in Ghana (although he joked that they are probably also spying on him) and he expected to see Kufuor in the next few days. Burkina Faso's President Campoare told Olympio that he could not afford to take a tough stand on Togo and risk alienating Gnassingbe because Burkina relies too heavily on access to Togo's deep water port. Benin's President Kerekou is "strange" and uninterested in engaging on Togo, Olympio opined.

Looking for International Support

16. (C) Olympio appreciated pressure from President Bush, which he saw as a key factor in convincing Gnassingbe to step down. He plans to visit Lome for one day on March 19 to address a large rally (he said 150,000 people) and hopes to meet Ambassador Engle and the German Ambassador (he saw Germany as helpful because of its large Togolese expat community and historical colonial ties). Olympio hoped the USG can help provide technical advice for the election and financial support for international (including ECOWAS) observers. He also hopes for continued USG pressure to ensure elections which are relatively free and fair.

Comment

17. (C) Olympio seemed tired but generally relaxed. He said he needed to spend more time thinking through his next steps. He was disappointed by his meetings in Abuja. He received a number of phone calls during the meeting and is clearly pulled in many directions. When asked about the post-election period, the potential for significant ethnic violence, or a refugee crisis, he had little to say (except that violence is possible). His mind is clearly on the immediate task of lending his weight and strategic thinking behind the opposition campaign and lining up international support for the election. He also had little to say when asked about his personal security in Togo, noting that he plans to surround himself with large crowds ("The military will not machine gun a large gathering"). We are not aware of intervention from President Bush in the Togo crisis. We surmise that Olympio may be referring to the Department's statements on the Togo political situation. Olympio has a house in Accra, his mother is Ghanaian, he spent considerable time over the years here, and he clearly feels comfortable in Ghana. He plans to return to Accra after his one-day trip to Lome this weekend and will likely use his house here as a base during the campaign.

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